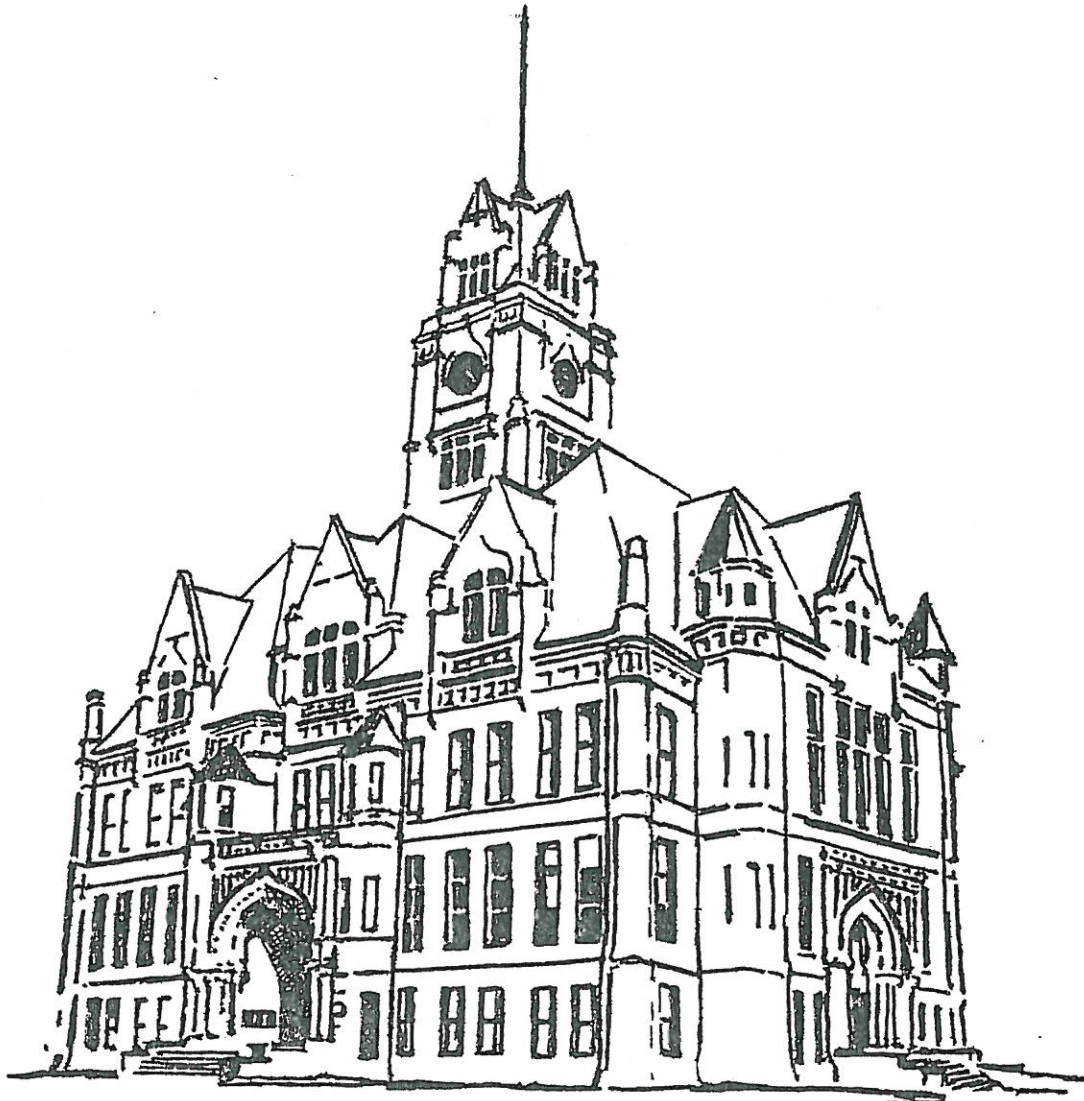




*Sketches of
Jasper County*

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of
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by
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and

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Before the White Man Came

It is hard to decide just where to start on a project like this. According to my dictionary - History is the branch of knowledge dealing with past events. In that case I suppose the proper opening would be "In the beginning God created the Heaven and the Earth." No, I'm not going to go through the whole creation process, but actually even though we generally think of history as events which involve people directly, still much of the reason for people being in a particular place at a particular time is because of the geology of the location along with the political situation of the time.

It is interesting to read of the ice age and how during this period great glaciers did move over the land now known as Jasper County. This would account for the wide variety of soil and mineral deposits we have here today. This has been and is important to the people who have come to live here.

Just who were the early inhabitants before we became a part of the United States, Indiana, and then Jasper County? Well, we have some evidence of prehistoric man living in Indiana as early as 15,000 B.C. There also is evidence that man representing two other cultures lived here before 800 B.C.

From 800 B.C. until 900 A.D. there lived in Indiana a group of people we have come to call the "Mound Builders". Most of the concentration of mound builders seemed to be in Southern Indiana along the Ohio. But, from what I have read, traces of these mound builders have been found in our own Jasper County. They have found mounds along the Kankakee in Porter County and one was found on the east side of the Iroquois River about four miles northeast of Rensselaer, or so it is recorded in the 1883 edition of the County History. This mound was said to be ten feet high and about 40 feet in diameter. I've never found out for sure just exactly where this mound was.

There is no evidence that the mound builders had any relationship to the Indians who lived here when the first white explorer came. The Indians who lived here during the early part of the 19th century were the Potowatomies. They probably came about 1725. They were seeking to evade the extreme cold of Wisconsin and Michigan. They helped the first white settlers to make a living in the raw, uncultivated country and were of a very high level of civilization. They were interested in agriculture and made a practice of burning off their fields at the end of the growing season in preparation for the coming year. Potowatomie means fire builder and it was because of their habit of burning their fields that they came to be known as

Potowatomies. What happened to these Indians? Exactly what happened to many Indians who were living on land that our country wanted for expansion purposes. In 1838 they joined the Trail of Tears to the land across the Mississippi. Hundreds of them died on the way. This is a fact of history which in my way of thinking is nothing to be proud of. We literally drove them off their land.

But the land was good and our country was anxious to expand have the land settled with the pioneers just as soon as the county was opened to settlement.

The Kankakee River

Indiana boasts of about a dozen main rivers and our own Kankakee is one. Like many American rivers, it has been handed down to us with an Indian name which changed repeatedly to meet the tongue and imagination of the French mapmaker traveling with LaSalle. The Potowatamie's name for it was Au-Ki-Ki meaning beautiful river. Eventually this turned into the name we now give it - the Kankakee.

The first record we have of white men visiting our county is when LaSalle and his men in 1679, under the direction of King Louis XIV, carried their boats across from the St. Joe River at South Bend and started their trip down the Kankakee. These men were looking for a shorter, easier way to get from the Great Lakes down the Mississippi and eventually to the Gulf, connecting their colonies in Canada with those at the mouth of the Mississippi. They hoped to claim all the land along the way. Competition for territory in this new land was intense. The English had a settlement in Virginia in 1607. The Dutch had colonized Manhattan in 1614. Spain was sending out tentacles into the Southwest. LaSalle is known to have passed this way several times after his journey in 1679. On November 10, 1687 LaSalle met his death at the hand of a jealous deserter at a fort he and his men had erected on the Trinity River in Texas. The Kankakee region became a land of controversy. LaSalle had taken it in the name of the French Crown and England coveted the Northwest for its furs and as a place for expansion. The colonies along the eastern seaboard were becoming crowded. Finally, as a result of the French and Indian War, it came into the hands of the English.

Besides the transportation aspect, the natural resources along the Kankakee were an attraction to hunters, trappers, and fishermen. The swamplands (for that is indeed what the Kankakee was) had been the hunting ground for the Potowatomies. They were driven from their homes and this paradise of wild game by the white settlers who came in the early 19th century. However, since it was so swampy it was slow to develop.

The record shows that attempts were made to get the sprawling river contained within reasonable banks. The first such attempt was in 1900 when it was cleaned and dredged. Again in 1915 and in 1917 it was straightened which eliminated many of the 2000 bends of the original zig-zag path. This did away with the lake-like quality of the river and most of the islands no longer existed.

The marshland around the river remained a haven for hunters, trappers and fishermen for many years. Hunting lodges and fishing camps were established and many resorts began to attract

people to the Kankakee. Author General Lew Wallace stayed at the Pittsburgh Club near Baums Bridge in Wheatfield. He enjoyed the serenity and solitude and said about the place, "Never was there a more beautiful spot." He owned a house boat which he kept there during the warmer parts of the year. He loaned it to president-elect Benjamin Harrison in November of 1888.

One relic of the past which still stands is a bridge which some believe to be the parts of the giant ferris wheel which made its appearance at the Worlds Fair in Chicago in 1893; others, however, said that it was made from the iron structure taken from one of the buildings of that fair. It became known as Dunns Bridge and is still standing but is no longer safe for traffic.

Many interesting stories could be told about this river, some true and many probably not.

The Iroquois and Its Tributaries

Second in importance to the Kankakee in Jasper County would no doubt be the Iroquois. The land north of Kniman is drained by the Kankakee and the remainder of the county is drained by the Iroquois with its many creeks and ditches.

The earliest white settler to come to Jasper County was a man by the name of William Donahue. He came in 1832 just as soon as this county was opened for settlement. He was attracted by the abundance of fur-bearing animals which included beaver and deer. The rivers were full of fish and the population of game birds was dense around the river areas. Mr. Donahue came to what is now Gillam Township and settled along the Pinkamink River. The Pinkamink is the Historic name for the Ryan Ditch. This river starts just northeast of Newland. It flows south past the old Francesville Road then meanders westward and southward joining the Iroquois just south of County Road 400 South, between 380 and 290 West. It was at this point that Thomas Randle and George Culp chose to settle in 1834. They had come from Virginia and met a Mr. Morris who had been surveying this area. He suggested a fine location and directed them to this spot. These men were later joined by John Parkison, Royal Hazelton and Henry Barkley, Jr.

The Iroquois was originally called the Rapids of the Rock-wise and was a favorite resort of the Potawatomie Indians. It was an abundant supply of all sorts of fish, bass, bream, pike, salmon, mullet and suckers. Some of them weighing as much as 25 pounds.

The Iroquois has its historic source approximately two miles west of 231. It flows north from that point turning east just west of Parr and starts south again near County Road 680 West. It flows south and east until it meets the Pinkamink and then starts its trip toward the west through Rensselaer making an almost complete circle. It continues westward leaving Jasper County and eventually traveling northward to join the Kankakee in Illinois.

From the information I have been able to gather it is considered by the department of natural resources to be a navigable river up as far as Rensselaer. This status harks back to the time when canoes were the main means of river transportation.

The Iroquois was dredged in 1906 at which time it was necessary to move the Washington Street bridge, an iron structure, so that the big dredge could go through. They moved the

bridge up to the area between what now is Murphy's Standard Station and Arihood's Tire Shop. I have always understood that it was also straightened at this point. Elizabeth Hoover's father, B. J. Moore, came to Rensselaer to do this dredging. Elizabeth remembers the dynamite stored in their barn and how they were warned repeatedly to keep hands off. The river was dredged as far as to where the Dexter ditch comes in. This is legally the starting of the river, but as I said earlier, old timers say it starts just west of 231. This part is now called the Swaim Ditch. The banks of the river have been cleaned out since 1906.

The Iroquois has many creeks and ditches flowing into it. I have found that the ditches often change names but Curtis Creek remains Curtis Creek and Carpenter Creek remains Carpenter Creek. Carpenter Creek has long been identified with the county coming into it from the south circling the town of Remington and flowing by Fountain Park and joining the Iroquois about where I-65 goes over the river. This stream made possible much entertainment for the early visitors to Fountain Park. Records show that boating was one of the things to look forward to in the early days of the Park.

I am sure that there are memories for many people who are connected with the waterways of the county. Before the strict attention for clean water in which to swim there were many spots known as good swimming holes. I have waded and paddled around in the Pinkamink, the Iroquois, Carpenter Creek, and Curtis Creek. Should I mention a spot called Green Willows? When I was growing up we girls were told not to go near this place - the boys used this as a place to skinny dip. Green Willows was just east of Padgitt's bridge. Padgitt's bridge crosses the Iroquois at Melville Street. The river makes a bend there hiding the boys "old swimming hole". You weren't surprised that we girls knew exactly where it was, are you?

Early Settlements

When the first settlers came they found the Potowatomie Indians living here, hunting and fishing in the swamplands and streams. We know of three villages of this tribe who made their homes here. The principal village was located in Newton Township. The chiefs were: Chief Job with a following of 300 persons, Chief Jim with a 110 and Chief Wapanotta with a smaller band. Their corn fields were scattered all over the county. The corn was, of course, the multi-colored variety much like what we now call Indian corn. These Indians cured fish by drying them in pits which were located southeast of Rensselaer. They preferred dogfish. They dried them until they became a fine dry powder. They combined this powder with corn meal to make a very acceptable dish for them. In 1838 under the direction of General Tipton the large majority of these Indians were removed to a reservation in Kansas. They left behind some evidences of their having been here with the tools and arrowheads which we still can find today in the rural areas. We also have a few of the trail trees scattered around the county attesting to their former presence.

William Donahue was the first white settler to come to Jasper County. He settled in Gillam Township. A settlement grew up near there which was named Saltillo. It was located about 200 yards south of where the old Francesville road crosses the Pinkamink. The families of John Gillam and Joseph McJimsey came in 1836 and others followed. Saltillo was an important settlement in the early years of the county, still it did not survive. The township was named after John Gillam. He came here from Carroll County. William Donahue did involve himself in the life of the county but after his death his family left this area.

Thomas Randle and George Culp came and settled at the fork of the Iroquois and the Pinkamink. This became quite a little settlement with the first blacksmith shop, store, and schoolhouse in Jasper County. The first brick home was erected by Thomas Randle. The first church of the county met in the home of George Culp. This was known as the Iroquois Mission and is now the Trinity United Methodist Church located in Rensselaer. The appointment of a minister to this church was made October 22, 1833. His name was Enoch Wood.

Davidsonville is another early settlement laid out by Moses E. and Lewis Davidson. It was recorded in June of 1850. Located a short distance from Saltillo it consisted of two blocks; one street and one alley. There were several buildings including a mill, a grocery, and a shop or two. It was within the present limits of Hanging Grove Township. This township got its name because there was a grove of oaks which by some freak of nature, drooped almost to the ground. It was here in 1837 that the families of Robert Parker and Robert and William Overton came, followed by John Lefler.

Blue Grass in Newton Township was an Indian gathering place. Blue Grass came to replace the disappearing wild grass giving this community its name. The Benjamins, Elijahs, Thomases, Yeomans, Mallatts, and others formed this community. It had a church and a school but no real village. Mr. Benjamin was one of the earliest "corn crackers". He used a home-invented device which stood on a stump about eight feet from the ground. This machine cracked corn for customers from ten to fifteen miles around until better mills were established. The early pioneers were all challenged to invent their own tools and machines. Living was hard, making a livelihood for your family was back-breaking and muscle power and brain power was all they had to make a go of it. When the muscles got sore the brain sometimes took over.

The Gifford Railroad

Transportation has always played an important part in the early development of any area. Jasper County had one man who influenced the development of several little communities in Jasper County. This man was Benjamin Gifford. He bought 36,000 acres of marshy swamp land in the northern part of the county for \$3.50 an acre and not only did he drain the land making farming it possible but he constructed a railroad through his land.

Officially this railroad was called the Chicago Wabash Valley Railroad, but the old timers call it the Gifford Road. His dream was to connect Lafayette with Chicago going through Jasper County. He started his road at Kersey and extended it south to McCoysburg. He never got very far out of Jasper County although eventually he did cross the Kankakee just north of DeMotte and went as far as Dinwiddie in Porter County. He had the road graded as far as to within nine miles of Gary. He also built a bridge over the Monon tracks at McCoysburg and had the grade completed for about four miles south of there. Mr. Gifford died in 1913 and the Monon took over his Chicago and Wabash Valley Line. It was abandoned sometime in the late twenties. However it did, indeed, play an important part in the lives of people along its route. Almost every little village had an elevator, stock yard, a store, and many boasted of a post office. The train had one engine, several freight cars, and one passenger car providing for not only shipment of produce and goods but also passenger service.

I have heard my folks talk about hiring the train on Sunday to take the "young folks" up the tracks for a picnic. They could stop along the way and pick up their friends and play baseball wherever they found a likely field and a group willing to play. My parents grew up in the McCoysburg area.

Since Mr. Gifford started his line in the northern part of the county I will start there telling you what I have been able to find out about the settlements along the way. Kersey, which is in Wheatfield and Keener Townships stood at the intersection of the Gifford Line and of the Chicago, Indiana and Southern Railroad. This community is still a vital part of our county life with its elevator serving many farmers in the northern part of the county. According to the 1909 atlas it had about three blocks in Keener Township and three in Wheatfield. The 1909 atlas was my major source when researching the information about these small communities.

Laura, another little settlement, was in Walker Township about four miles east of 231. It consisted of two houses, a store and a storage house. When the railroad was dismantled, the buildings were torn down some time in the early 1930's.

Gifford was a village in Barkley Township with one main street and several cross streets. It consisted of about six blocks. The railroad ran diagonally through the village.

Asphaltum, another village along the way, seems to have been in both Gillam and Walker Townships. The map shows a spur line of the Gifford Road going to Asphaltum.

Next down the line in Barkley Township was the town of Newland. It consisted of about three blocks.

Lewiston was another stop in Barkley Township along the Gifford Road. It was located north and east of the Barkley Church between Newland and Moody. There was a hotel, school, a cattle loading platform and scale house. Nothing now remains of the village.

Another stop on the way south was Pleasant Grove, also in Barkley Township. This made about four settlements in Barkley. This is not surprising when you know that Barkley is one of the two largest townships in the state. Pleasant Grove was located two and 1/2 miles east of the Barkley Church. There was a store, an elevator, and a small stockyard. The store was also used as a postoffice. It was in this store that my parents started housekeeping in 1907. My dad was working as a grocery clerk for Murrays and left to work for Tom Callahan who owned the store at Pleasant Grove. Dad also acted as postmaster. The following year he returned to Murrays as a bookkeeper, a position he held until his death in 1950. In 1911 Fred and Emma Markin purchased the store and ran it until 1925. In 1914 Charles Moody decided the name should be changed to Moody and steps were taken to do this. Nothing now remains of this settlement.

There was one more and final village to include in this part of our county history and that was at the very southern end of the Gifford Line, a village called McCoysburg. I found a great deal of material about this town thanks to Nancy Meyer and her group who, in 1976, got together a wonderful book about Hanging Grove Township.

McCoysburg started as a trading post by a Dutchman by the name of Dumke. It went by several names including Zard Station and Marlboro. It was probably named McCoysburg by the officials of the Monon Railroad. The Monon also ran through McCoysburg. Alfred A. McCoy came into the possession of a great deal of land there. This land was called the McCoy Ranch. The ranch house is still standing. For a time it was a hotel. It stands on the north side of the tracks and is used as a residence.

This village became quite a busy little spot with two railroads passing through. It had a store, postoffice, barber shop, school and Methodist Church. It is still a quiet little residential area and the church is still there, a part of the Covenant Parish.

Other Railroad Settlements

Now let's go back to the northern part of the county to the Indiana and Southern Railroad. It went through Wheatfield, Kankakee and Keener Townships. We will also consider the Chicago and Eastern Illinois which crossed Wheatfield, Walker and Union Townships. Wheatfield on both of these railroads published a book in preparation for their centennial in 1983. In this book prepared by the Wheatfield Historical Society I learned that in 1882 a Mr. Welsh operated a store there. The town was platted in 1883 and incorporated in 1884. This community, being close to the Kankakee River, served as a place for supplies for the early hunters, fishermen and trappers. This town is still a thriving community, NIPSCO has added much to the area occupying 4200 acres just two miles north of the town limits. They celebrated their Centennial on Saturday, April 28, 1984, at which time they buried a time capsule in their town park. This is to be opened in 2084.

Another little settlement on this railroad called Stoutsburg, also in Wheatfield Township, was composed of about three blocks.

This railroad was built in 1883 and accounts for that date being a starting time for the settlements. It was in this year that the town of Dunnville was started. A two room school was erected here. This was about the time that the swamps were drained and this region became good for farming. Dunnville was named after Isaac Dunn who was the man who got the idea of bringing the ferris wheel (or possibly building) from the Chicago Worlds Fair to build the Dunn's Bridge.

Because of the mail getting mixed up with that of Danville, Mr. Dunn decided to have the town's name changed to Tefft. Mr. Tefft was a relative of Mr. Dunn's. Tefft was the ambassador to Sweden under President Lincoln. The original plat consisted of about eight blocks.

Kersey is also on this railroad. I mentioned it in connection with the Gifford Road.

Other towns along the Chicago and Eastern Illinois besides Wheatfield were Kniman, Virgie and Fair Oaks. Kniman is in Walker Township and had two north and south streets and three east and west streets. In Union Township the railroad went through the village of Virgie. It consisted of two north and south streets and five east and west streets. This community is still active and boasts of a very fine Christian Church.

Now for the Chicago, Indianapolis and Louisville or Monon Railroad. We have already mentioned McCoysburg and I will take up Rensselaer later. Let us then go to Fair Oaks which was a

place where the Monon met the Chicago and Eastern Illinois. Fair Oaks was settled mostly by people of German descent. In 1909 the atlas shows that it contained 16 blocks. Because the railroads met there it became a gathering place. A pool hall and a dance hall added color and activity in the early days. It is still an active community.

Parr, also on the Monon, consisted of about ten blocks. Each of these little towns probably had postoffices, but none as famous as the one run by Mrs. Randolph from 1938 until 1968. This 9' by 12' building was one of the smallest post-offices in the United States. It had an exciting history including a robbery. We now have this building at the fairgrounds and it contains all of the equipment that was in it at the time of closing. The Rosebud School also at the fairgrounds came from near Parr. Parr still contributes much to county life as a community and as a place for the farmers to sell their grain.

Remington and DeMotte

The town of Remington came into being because of the construction of the great east and west thoroughfare known as the Logansport, Peoria and Burlington Railroad. The land was known as the Grand Prairie. The first settler to take up a claim was John Jordan. No better farming land can be found in all the world than that around Remington. This was true in 1860 when the railroad was built and remains so today. The railroad authorities established a station at Carpenter's Creek and called it Carpenter. Carpenter's Creek got its name from an old hunter who came to this area in the 1830's. He froze to death during the very cold winter of 1840. He was buried on a high bluff somewhere along the south side of the creek.

Jessie H. Fordice is credited for having laid out the village in 1860. He owned the land on which the settlement stood and promised the railroad every other plat of 20 plats to complete the switch. The first train came through in 1861.

The name was changed to Remington after one of its citizens who kept the second store in the village. He was a good friend of Mr. Fordice. The first store was built by George B. Clark. In 1870 new men by the names of Church and Hartley erected the first elevator and two years later a second one was erected by the Hathaway Brothers and a third was built in 1879 by James Irvin.

Remington continues to grow and is an important part of our county life. The people are friendly and extremely proud of their town. This pride is never greater than when Fountain Park is in session. This event is an annual occurrence lasting two weeks. People come for miles around to be a part of it and share in the good fellowship. When one year's activities have come to a close, people start to plan immediately for the next year. The chatauqua originated in 1895 with U. S. Senator John J. Ingalls delivering his famous lecture titled "The Perils of the Republic". Since then many prominent persons have appeared including William Jennings Bryan and Billy Sunday.

At one time special trains ran from Logansport picking up passengers along the way to participate in the activities at Fountain Park. Yes, Fountain Park is something of which not only Remington but all Jasper County can be justly proud.

Remington is at the south end of the County and DeMotte at the north. DeMotte is on the land which borders the Kankakee River. This swampy land was officially given to the State of Indiana by the Federal Government in 1850 upon the condition that the land would be drained for agriculture. Settlers were slow to come here preferring the higher, drier land. The earliest settlers to what is now known as DeMotte were the Fairchilds; Elam in 1866 and Daniel in 1868. The

William Tyler family also came in 1868. All three of these men were long time active members of the community.

The Otis brothers purchased hundreds of acres just south of DeMotte and sponsored large numbers of settlers, especially those of Dutch descent, to help farm this land. These early Dutch were a stoutly religious people and Dutch church services were held as early as 1892.

By 1880 there was talk of a railroad running through this part of the county and this brought about the necessity for a town. Many lots were donated or sold for \$5.00 or \$10.00 by Alex McDonald and Don Fairchild, Sr. Soon there was a town, a town without a name. Due to the fact that many of the men of the community were Civil War veterans they chose the name of DeMotte in honor of Col. Mark L. DeMotte. Actually Col. DeMotte spent very little time in the town. He was born in Rockville, Indiana. He came to Valparaiso to establish a law practice. He served in the war and upon returning to Valparaiso in 1877 he established the law school at the University. He served one term in Congress and was a State Senator. He also served as postmaster in Valparaiso.

The town of DeMotte also has the distinction of being the birthplace of the Honorable Charles A. Halleck.

In 1936 a terrible fire almost entirely destroyed the village. The damage was estimated to be between 100,000 and 200,000 dollars. But those sturdy Dutch people survived and it soon became a strong community again.

DeMotte was incorporated in 1965 but due to a court injunction the official incorporation was delayed until March 11, 1967.

Like the railroads and the rivers, the highways also provide reason for the establishment and growth of an area. DeMotte has certainly experienced a great influx of people from the northern part of the state since the building of I-65. Due to its location, its fertile land, and its dedicated people, it will continue to be an important part of Jasper County.

Pleasant Ridge and Rensselaer

Pleasant Ridge was located east of Rensselaer on the Monon Route. At one time there was a store, a school, stock yards and an elevator. Mr. Joseph Vance Parkison first owned the store. He sold it to Roy Lowman. In 1910 Clifford Parkison (father of Helen Rhoads) purchased the store and rebuilt it. The new building was two stories and included one hundred post office boxes for the use of the people of the area. Four passenger trains passed through each day and Mr. Parkison sold tickets to McCoysburg, Rensselaer, Fair Oaks, Parr and Chicago. Many children rode the train from here to attend school in Rensselaer. In 1943 the store closed. Now the Pleasant Ridge area is known for its stone quarry, Farm Bureau Elevator and Talbert Trailers.

Recently I learned this interesting fact about the Monon. It was opened for use on February 14, 1878. On that date a huge barbecue was staged in Rensselaer to celebrate the occasion. Mr. McCoy furnished the meat.

Our last settlement to consider is that of our county seat, Rensselaer. Like so many others it was established here because of the Iroquois River. The early settlers knew it by the name of Rockwise, but was later changed to Iroquois. This stream was famous among the Indians and early hunters and trappers. The rapids of the Iroquois attracted the Randles and the Culps in 1834 but after consideration they rejected it in favor of the site near the junction of the Pinkamink and the Iroquois.

The following year, 1835, Joseph D. Yeoman and his father-in-law David Nowels came to the rapids where Mrs. Yeoman chose the exact site for the cabin which they placed where the Washington Street bridge crosses the river. Unfortunately this cabin no longer exists but we can look at the cabin located at the fairgrounds and imagine one similar located on the Iroquois. The one at the fairgrounds is authentic. It came from Barkley Township built in 1870 by Mark Quick. It was given to us by the Granville Hall family.

The Yeoman family moved into the cabin during the winter of 1836 before it had either a fireplace or a door. The nearest neighbor was David Phegley who lived five miles east. In the spring of 1836 while her husband was absent, Mrs. Yeoman and her children were visited by a group of fifty Indians who had come to fish. They caught loads of fish, keeping the dog fish and exchanging the pickerel and bass for some of Mrs. Yeoman's home made bread.

Mr. Yeoman started to clear the land and made it ready for farming. Mr. Mallatt located across the river from Mr. Yeoman.

Both Mr. Yeoman and Mr. Mallatt lost their claims to the land because of the peculiar way the government had of disposing of its lands. The government would issue floats to people giving them title to so much land. W. M. Kenton obtained a float which deprived Mr. Mallatt of his land while James Van Rensselaer, a merchant from Utica, New York, became the owner of another float which entitled him to take possession of the land which Joseph Yeoman had settled, fenced and cultivated. There is no evidence that he paid Mr. Yeoman even \$1.00 for the land and improvements.

On June 13, 1839, the original plat of the town of Newton was filed. The county seat was located here. The name was changed to Rensselaer in 1844. After the death of Mr. Van Rensselaer in 1847 the family returned to New York. Several decendants of Joseph Yeoman still live in Jasper County.

In 1850 the town contained three stores, two physicians, one lawyer and fifteen houses. In 1858 steps were taken to incorporate the town, but the Civil War slowed this down. In 1866 the incorporation was revived and public matters began to mend. Board sidewalks were built and Washington Street was improved by macadamizing it with gravel. The town continued to prosper and by 1879 it had grown in population from one thousand to twelve hundred. With the coming of the railroad connecting Rensselaer to Indianapolis and Chicago, the future growth of the town was assured. Although we have only one passenger train each way every day, we do have I-65 which makes it easy for us to commute both north and south from and to Rensselaer.

Forming of Jasper County and Its Courthouses

In 1834 several counties in northwestern Indiana were formed. Among them were Newton and Jasper. These two counties in no way included the land included in them now. Jasper County included all of what is now Benton County and parts of Newton County. Newton included parts of what is now Jasper, Lake, and Porter counties. In 1836 and 37 Porter and Lake Counties were formed taking part of Newton County.

In 1838 it was decided to establish the court at the George Spitler home located south of Brook. Here he built a log cabin to accommodate the county offices. This was our first courthouse.

In 1838 Jasper and Newton Counties were combined and the newly formed county was called Jasper County. We were then the largest county in the state. The county seat was located at the Falls of the Iroquois and they called the town Newton. In 1840 court was held in an old half demolished cabin. This building was not used long because it was infected with bedbugs.

In 1840 Benton County was formed taking its land from Jasper County. The name of the town of Newton was changed to Rensselaer. A new courthouse was built on Kellner Boulevard where the parking lot is that is just east of Tom's Supermarket. There is a picture of this building on the second floor of our present courthouse.

In 1859 Newton County was formed taking its land from Jasper County leaving our county in its present form. We are now the third largest county.

In 1845 James Van Rensselaer constructed a courthouse on a lot east of the central public square on Cullen Street. This building was used until 1856 when a brick building was constructed in the public square. It was a two story building which was badly damaged by fire in 1864. It was rebuilt and used for the next twenty-one years.

In 1896 the 1856 building was torn down to make room for our present building. Our new courthouse was completed in 1898. The first architect employed for this project was Alfred Grindle. He later associated himself with Charles R. Weatherhogg of Fort Wayne, Indiana. Before the building was completed, Mr. Grindle dropped out.

Our courthouse is a fine example of Victorian adaptation of the medieval gothic form of architecture. It echoes the unique style used in English country houses of this period. Several features point this out, such as the free standing

chimneys, the high pitched roof, the gabled dormers, the turrets, the painted plaster columns in the hallways, and the stone arches in the basement. The construction is of rough-cut bedford stone. It cost a total of \$141,731.94.

The building stands on a solid rock foundation. The earth being excavated down to the basic limestone, the surface of which was found to have the appearance of having been planed off and to have other marks of prehistoric scourings. The clock tower is 120 feet tall. The basement floor has had a cement floor poured over forty percent of its area. This was done in 1981. In 1982 an elevator was installed serving the first three floors. At the time this was done much remodeling of the third floor was done to better accommodate the courts. The unfinished fourth floor is used for storage and as an access to the tower.

This building attracts the attention of everyone who visits our town and serves as a point of reference for all of us who have grown up here. Many memories of band concerts, street fairs, political rallies, parades, and our Little Cousin Jasper Festival include thoughts of this our own "County Castle".

One final word. Although Jasper County History spans a mere one hundred and fifty years, we have a heritage of which we should all be proud. God gave us a fertile land and man has put this land to use in a wide variety of ways by producing a diversity of crops including truck farming, blueberries, strawberries, asparagus, corn, wheat, oats and soy beans. Some of the land is used for raising livestock. We should also be most grateful for such an inheritance passing it on to future generations for they, our children, are our most important product.

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